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The Tenth International Congress of Textile Workers

(Paris, 19 to 24 September 1921)

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The first international meeting of textile workers took place in 1893 at Zürich. It was then decided to hold an International Congress of Textile Workers at regular intervals, and the first met in Manchester in 1894, seven countries having sent delegates representing a total of 179,000 members. Shortly before the war, at the end of 1912, eight countries, with a membership of 826,400, were affiliated with the International Federation of Textile Workers. The Ninth Congress took place shortly before the outbreak of war in 1914 at

Blackpool (England). The next Congress was to meet in 1917 at Lyons (France), but had to be cancelled owing to the war. It took place instead from 19 to 24 September this year in Paris.

During the war relations were more or less suspended. The International Committee did not meet again until 1920 at Amsterdam, and again at Berlin in March 1921. In view of the difficulties involved in convening a congress in Paris, it was decided at the later meeting to hold it in Austria. However, through the intervention of the International Labour Office, as reported in the *Textilarbeiter* of Berlin on 7 October, all difficulties connected with the journey were successfully overcome, so that at the last moment it was possible to organise the Congress in Paris ⁽¹⁾.

Meeting of the International Committee

The Congress was preceded by a session lasting two days (16-17 September 1921) of the International Committee, which is composed of one or two representatives of each affiliated country. Its purpose was to come to a decision on the applications for assistance made by the textile workers on strike in Belgium and Northern France and by the Hungarian Union, the extension of the International Secretariat and the abolition or strengthening of the international strike fund. Resolutions on all these points were drafted for the consideration of the Congress.

Opening Session of the Congress

The Congress was opened on Monday, 19 September. Mr. VANDEPUTTE (*France*) was in the chair. The Chairman expressed the pleasure of the French Union that the first meeting of the International after the war was being held in Paris. He reported on the progress of the strike of textile workers in the North of France and in Belgium. At his suggestion a telegram expressing sympathy was sent to them by the Congress, as also to the textile workers on strike in Italy.

Mr. SHAW, the International Secretary, stated that the Hungarian Union had sent a message to the Congress regretting that it was unable to send a representative. The great American Textile Workers' Union had regretted being unable to take part in the Congress on this occasion owing to the recent demise of their President, but it still maintained its affiliation to the International. Contrary to statements made in certain journals, the Russian Union had been invited to the Congress, like all other unions, but all communications addressed to it had hitherto remained unanswered.

⁽¹⁾ A representative of the I. L. O. was present at all the session of the Congress.

Extension of the International Secretariat

A resolution in the following terms was laid before the Congress by the International Committee:

The International Committee recommends that Comrade Shaw should be re-elected International Secretary and that a sufficient sum of money should be put at his disposal to develop the International Secretariat, and asks the Congress to empower the International Committee to take any steps it may deem desirable for the further development of the Secretariat.

Mr. SHAW gave an account of developments since the last Congress, held in Blackpool in 1914. Soon after the outbreak of war communications between the individual organisations became quite impossible, and for some time this was even the case between England and France. But on the occasion of the first meeting after the war in Amsterdam, such a spirit of friendship and oblivion of the past was displayed that one could only wish all other classes would show a similar anxiety to reach a lasting understanding in the future and thus prevent further war.

Since the Amsterdam meeting a keen desire had been expressed on many sides that the International should extend its activities, but for this purpose it possessed neither an office nor a full-time official. It was decided to issue a Bulletin, but the first number immediately showed that such action was too expensive and that the many translations involved resulted in too much delay. Later a system of exchanging reports by correspondence once a month was adopted, but this had proved just as unsatisfactory. The speaker continued:

It has been generally desired to obtain more information on conditions in all countries, including the non-European. Thus I have been invited to go to India in order to co-operate there in developing the organisation of textile workers. In Japan too the industry is rapidly growing. All these countries must be covered if the International is really to fulfil its purpose. Frontiers and race questions must not be allowed to hamper the workers. The one object of the International must be the improvement of the conditions of all workers. This is all the more necessary when we remember that the industries and workers of the older countries cannot permanently maintain their position as long as longer hours and lower wages prevail in other countries.

The question of industrial democracy is also of great interest to us, and reliable information in all other fields is desirable. But the difficulty of obtaining such material is illustrated by the fact that not even the constitutional rule is observed according to which each national Union must send in an exhaustive report as to its own conditions six months before the Congress. Something must be done if these requirements are to be more adequately met in future.

In the second session of the Congress, Mr. JAECKEL (*Germany*) dealt with the same question.

The resolution before the Congress is a compromise between the Danish proposal to appoint a permanent international secretary and the Swiss proposal to transfer the seat of the Federation, which latter proposal was,

however, unsupported by the other delegates. In view of the present depressed economic situation, Comrade Shaw is against the appointment of a permanent international secretary, but the expense to the International of paying a few officials should not be allowed to be an obstacle in face of the three or four hundred officials employed by our unions for national purposes. The Danish and Belgian delegates finally proposed that an honorary secretary should be elected, but that assistant secretaries and staff of various nationalities should also be appointed, while the German and Swiss desired the appointment of a permanent international secretary who would in addition be given the necessary assistants. We adopted the text now before you because it empowers the International Committee, if necessary, to appoint a permanent secretary. The need for such a step will probably be made evident very shortly. Further, the resolution naturally implies that the secretary will at once appoint the necessary additional staff.

We are most anxious that Comrade Shaw should remain our secretary, and that he should, at the same time, continue his parliamentary and other public activities, as they cannot but be of service to our International. With respect to the working of the Secretariat, we have a series of demands which will be considered in full in an amendment to the above resolution. These express the wish that the International Secretariat may advise, support, and really lead the movement, and that we may not merely give utterance to platonic aspirations but also be able to proceed to effective action after careful examination of all the circumstances.

Mr. SMITH (*Great Britain*) moved an amendment to the resolution to the effect that in the question of appointing a permanent secretary the Committee should report to the next Congress, with whom the final decision should lie. This limitation was necessary because otherwise the powers of the Committee would go further than was compatible with English views; only the Congress itself should be allowed to decide on the appointment of an international secretary or the leading officials of the organisation. Such a decision could not be left to a small body.

After a number of speakers had spoken for or against the motions, the Congress decided to close the debate, and in the course of the third session the following resolution was unanimously adopted, the Swiss delegation abstaining from voting :

The International Committee recommends that Comrade Shaw be re-elected International Secretary, and that a sufficient sum of money be placed at his disposal to develop the International Secretariat, and requests the Congress to empower the International Committee to take any steps it may deem desirable for the further development of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat will deal with all matters affecting the textile industry and textile workers' organisations, and observe critically all movements and developments among employers' organisations. The national organisations are required to supply the International Secretary with all available material, and to comply promptly and scrupulously with all requests for reports, etc. In addition to the work previously done, the Congress desires an extension of activity to the following matters :

- (1) Statistical reports on wages and hours of textile workers.
- (2) Information to national organisations regarding important laws and regulations in the different countries.
- (3) Publication of a comprehensive annual report.
- (4) Regular information to national organisations on
 - a) Mutual relations of the textile industries of different countries.
 - b) The supply of raw material, price fixing, etc.

- c) Development of the textile industry in non-European countries.
- d) Commercial relations of the textile industries of all countries.
- e) Technical progress in the textile industry.

The appointment of a permanent Secretary shall be made by the Congress.

Action in support of the French and Belgian Strikers

Mr. VANDEPUTTE (*France*) gave a short account of the position of the struggle, which involved 60,000 textile workers in Northern France and 20,000 in the Vosges. As a result of recent labour movements the funds of the organisation had been exhausted. He hoped that, in spite of the clause in the constitution which lays down that no grant of assistance from the international fund can be considered until after nine weeks, the Congress would this time make an exception, especially as assistance would scarcely ever be possible under the old rule.

Mr. HANNICK (*Belgium*) proposed that similar assistance be granted to the strikers in his union. He stated that 15,000 members of the Belgian Union were opposing wage reductions in Northern France, while 5,000 were on strike in Belgium itself. In the French areas it was difficult to maintain even the small strike benefit of 15 francs per week, while the strikers in Belgium received the regular benefit of 7 francs per day.

Mr. VOOGSGEERD (*Netherlands*) reported, on behalf of the Sub-Committee which had dealt with this question, that the workers involved were now on strike for the third time against wage reductions. It was a matter for congratulation that their Italian comrades had been able to carry on their fight unaided, but the French Union was in a very difficult position. The Sub-Committee appointed by the International Committee therefore recommended that the Congress should appoint a committee in order to draft a proposal for supporting the strikers. The Congress agreed to this suggestion, and appointed Mr. Grinion (*Great Britain*), Mr. Galli (*Italy*), and Mr. Hoschka (*Germany*). This Sub-Committee reported later that the wages of the textile workers in Northern France had fallen to 20 francs per day, which the employers wished to reduce by 4 francs. On two previous occasions, the workers, in spite of their efforts, had failed to prevent wage reductions, but this time, in view of their unfavourable economic condition, they had resisted with the utmost energy. The Sub-Committee therefore proposed that preliminary relief to the amount of 200,000 francs should be granted out of the international strike fund, and that it should be left to the International Committee to take further steps if necessary, as dictated by the development of the conflict. The resolution was adopted unanimously, the Belgian and French delegations abstaining from voting. An Italian amendment to empower the Committee to intervene in the struggle in other countries if necessary was unsupported.

Hours and Wages

Mr. VOOGSGEERD (*Netherlands*) spoke in favour of a resolution put forward by the Dutch Union for the introduction of the 45-hour week, which became law in the Netherlands in October 1920. In that country the working week would, after a transition period, be 45 hours, or eight hours daily and five on Saturday, as from 1 October 1922. Owing to the reaction, however, a new Bill was now before Parliament fixing the annual period of work at 2,500 hours, so that the 45-hour week appeared to be in danger. The speaker therefore hoped that the struggle for a similar shortening of hours in other countries would be supported, and that for this reason the Dutch resolution would be accepted.

Mr. SHAW stated that in Great Britain there was as yet no legislation for the 48-hour week, but in practice the textile industry enjoyed a 47½-hour week, involving a period of work of at most four hours on Saturdays. Unfortunately the British Government had not yet carried out the obligations assumed at Washington.

Mr. CHRISTENSEN (*Denmark*) was of the opinion that the maximum daily hours should be fixed, and not the weekly hours, for otherwise there was a danger that in order to obtain a free Saturday afternoon the 8-hour day would be turned into a 9-hour day. As the workers readily agreed to such proposals, they would fall an easy prey to the employers instead of carrying the struggle for the principle of the 8-hour day.

Mr. ROEDEL (*Germany*) stated that in his country the 46-hour week had been introduced by collective agreement. It was true that the employers had given notice to terminate the agreement, but hitherto the workers had been strong enough to maintain what they had achieved. The Dutch proposal did not go far enough for them, for they wished to establish the principle of the 44-hour week.

Mr. MARTI (*Switzerland*) spoke in favour of the latter proposal, which was in agreement with the programme of the Swiss Union (maximum hours 8 daily, 44 weekly), although this demand could not yet be realised. Swiss factory legislation prescribed a 48-hour week, but it was being violently attacked by the employers, particularly on the grounds that beyond the frontier in Austria textile workers worked 9 hours or even longer.

Mr. OGDEN (*Great Britain*) moved, and the Congress approved, the appointment of a sub-committee composed of a French, an English, an Italian, a Czech, and a German delegate, who would draft a single proposal to be laid before the Congress⁽¹⁾.

(1) See p. 12 for the text of the resolution proposed by the Committee and passed by the Congress.

Financial Report

The two auditors appointed by the Congress to examine the financial report—a Belgian and a Czech delegate—moved its adoption. They had found the books in perfect order. They expressed surprise at finding expenses so low hitherto. Their report was unanimously approved.

The International Strike Fund

Mr. HANNICK (*Belgium*) reported on behalf of the sub-committee appointed to deal with this question.

When the strike fund was established with the full consent of our British comrades, it was generally hoped that this new measure would accelerate progress. Today, however, our British comrades wish to abolish this international fund, because they hold that in any case it is impossible to make it an effective weapon. The Continental delegates, on the other hand, are still of opinion that the fund must be maintained in any case, and that it is desirable to strengthen it, at least to the extent of raising the rate of contribution to correspond to the increase in wages. The sub-committee also proposes that the clause of the constitution postponing the grant of assistance until a dispute has lasted nine weeks should be amended, so that assistance can be granted on request after four weeks.

Mr. SHAW agreed to increasing the contributions, which in their present form were unfair. They ought to correspond to the rise in wages in each country. Mr. OGDEN (*Great Britain*) moved the abolition of the strike fund. This was necessary because the international strike fund in its present form was of small use, and greater sacrifices were impossible in the present industrial depression which was already exhausting trade union funds. After the British delegation had met separately, they proposed, as a compromise, that the question be referred to the International Committee for consideration and report to the next Congress. The German delegation then proposed the adjournment of the session in order to determine their attitude, because they demanded the immediate strengthening of the strike fund. After their separate meeting they did not relinquish their view, but as a concession they agreed to withdraw the further resolution to empower the International Committee to raise compulsory extra contributions for strike benefits. The British resolution to abolish the strike fund and to refer the question to the International Committee was rejected against the votes of the British delegates. The following resolution put forward by the Committee was then adopted, only the British delegates voting against it.

The International Committee, having considered the question of strengthening the strike fund of the International, and recognising the importance of a method of payment of contributions which will be absolutely just, recommends the Congress to refer the matter to the International Committee for consideration at a meeting to be held early next year, at which these contributions shall be fixed on the basis of the average earnings of textile workers, ignoring rates of exchange.

In the meantime the International Secretary will collect from each nation a statement of wages before the war and at present, so that a comparison may be made and a rate fixed which will be fair to all countries.

After this information has been supplied and the International Committee has fully considered the matter, the method of payment and the amount of contributions shall be fixed, the Committee always bearing in mind the position of the various organisations and the necessity of keeping the contributions at such an amount as will permit all organisations to remain members of the International.

The Russian Representative

During the fourth session, Mr. SHAW announced that Mr. Jecupe, a French delegate, had presented to him credentials from the Russian textile workers' organisation and asked for recognition as its delegate. A special committee consisting of one delegate from each country was appointed in order to decide whether these credentials could be admitted. At the beginning of the fifth session it was announced that the sub-committee was unable to present a unanimous report. The majority was against recognition, whilst the minority desired that the French delegate should be admitted as representative of the Russian Union. The committee therefore presented two resolutions, the first having obtained 7 and the second 3 votes on the committee. They ran as follows:

I. Since the Russian Textile Workers' Union has ceased to pay contributions to the International Federation, its affiliation has lapsed. The Committee considers that the Russian Textile Workers' Union is no longer a member of the International Federation, and in consequence has no right to representation at the International Congress. If the Russian Textile Workers' Union desires to become a member of the International Federation, it must make an application to that effect to the International Committee. The Congress must determine whether the French comrade deputed by the Russian Textile Workers' Union should be admitted as a guest.

II. In so far as an enquiry, which shall be instituted by the Executive Committee of the International Federation at the Congress itself, determines that the Russian Textile Workers' Union is still according to the constitution entitled to membership of our International, the Committee moves that the Congress shall admit the delegate of the Russian Union. The Committee is of the opinion that it is out of the question to send a Russian delegate to the Congress, in consequence of the political tension prevailing between Russia and other States. For this reason it grants the French comrade full rights of representation on behalf of the Russian Union.

Mr. ROEDEL (*Germany*) pointed out that the Russian Union, in accordance with a decision of the Committee meeting held in Amsterdam, had been invited to attend the Congress. However much one might object to the present leaders in Russia, one could not overlook the necessity of remaining in touch with the workers, whose opinions undoubtedly differed from those of their present rulers. Mr. SHAW said that the Russian Union, like all others, had been invited to the Congress. The question was, therefore, whether,

against all previous practice, a French delegate could undertake the representation of the Russian Union. It would be necessary to lay down exact rules for such cases, and to rule that only textile workers, members or officials of a union, could represent an organisation. After a lively debate on this point, in which many delegates took part, the vote was taken on a motion for closure, during which the French delegate with drew his Russian credentials; when it was announced that the voting was equal, and the motion therefore lost, he wished to retain the Russian mandate, but the chairman refused to reopen the subject⁽²⁾.

Unemployment

Mr. HOSCHKA (*Germany*) addressed the Congress on this subject.

The only resolution before the Congress on this point is the Belgian one. I wish to point out that unemployment is rife in all countries, and that many sections of the German textile industry are also very much affected, while others have to work for the capitalists of all countries. If conditions in Germany remain as they are much longer, the German worker will soon become the poorest in the whole world, for the present system means that the country is being completely sold out by the perpetual fall in the value of the mark. Our textile industry suffered most during the war, because of the shortage of all raw materials, and the state had to organise special, although inadequate, relief for textile workers. In addition to this, the costs of the world war fall almost wholly on our shoulders, which inevitably has very serious consequences for the workers. Of course we shall do everything in order to meet the obligations which we have contracted as a nation, but we are convinced that a remedy for the present world calamity can only be reached by international agreements and by socialisation of the chief means of production.

Mr. SHAW said that the chaos that had followed the war was so great that capitalism could find no remedy. The only possible solution lay in the co-operation of labour organisations. Unemployment reigned to-day in many countries which could produce goods that would serve to promote agriculture in other countries, and for lack of which these countries were being ruined. But this would only be possible if the working classes succeeded in acquiring economic and political power.

Mr. ROSCHER (*Czecho-Slovakia*):

Our country has become one of the greatest textile countries. In the German districts alone we have 24,000 workers unemployed and 45,000 on short time. In the Czech districts conditions are somewhat better. We still have the former Austrian decree on unemployment relief, but it has been modified most unfavourably. Until the enactment of the proposed new law, the unemployment relief amounts at present, under certain conditions, to 10 kronen daily, and 5 kronen for each member of the family up to three. The Ghent system of grants in aid of the unemployment benefits paid by trade unions is unfortunately ineffective, because, under present circumstances, the unions themselves are unable to pay benefits.

If we mean to take immediate steps against unemployment, we shall

(2) Later the Italian delegation made a statement on this question, protesting against the attitude of the chairman, and declining responsibility for the decision reached.

have to decide not to permit the setting up of new machinery in any country, nor to allow weavers who previously worked three or four looms to work more than two at the most. Similarly we should refuse to work overtime as long as unemployment prevails, and short-time workers should receive relief, to be paid by the state and the employer. At the same time, commercial agreements should be extended, so that the exchange of goods may correspond more closely to the needs of producers and consumers.

At the beginning of the sixth session, the discussion was resumed by Mr. BEN TURNER (*Great Britain*).

The number of unemployed in Great Britain at present is approximately three million. There is a general demand in our country for relief at the full rate of wages, for unemployment is regarded as the result of the bad economic system of today. As long as private profit, and not the employment and service of all, is the object of labour, we cannot extricate ourselves from our present difficulties. This is illustrated by wealthy America, which, in spite of all her war profits, now has five million unemployed. During the last eight months, our own trade unions have had to pay out so much in relief to their unemployed members that they have been compelled to withdraw benefits wholly or in part. An improvement in the present situation can only be attained through a better system of exchange of goods, and an essential condition for this is disarmament and the abolition of militarism. The revision of the Peace Treaties is also necessary, as they have had nothing but evil effects on both sides.

Mr. ROEDEL (*Germany*) said that perhaps the International Secretariat could obtain more exact information as to the number of looms worked by individual weavers. He asked whether a resolution should not also be passed stating that the only solution of the problem of unemployment was to be found in Socialism.

Mr. MARTI (*Switzerland*) said that the embroidery industry in his country had been almost completely at a standstill for a whole year, and the silk industry for eight months. Neither the employers nor the government could find a remedy. At present 70 per cent. of their workers were either wholly or partially unemployed. Immediately after the Armistice, the government had been induced to grant a few concessions in view of the general movement among the workers, but they were now trying to withdraw them as far as possible. The Swiss Union had already had to pay out 500,000 francs in unemployment benefit. Further, the embroidery employers were transferring their work to the neighbouring district of Vorarlberg in Austria, where an hourly wage of 100 kronen was only equivalent to 40 centimes of Swiss currency, while the Swiss minimum wage amounts to 1.20 francs an hour. As soon as the comrades over there demanded higher wages, however, they too were threatened with a stoppage of work.

Mr. DUCHESNE (*Belgium*): Before the War only 35 to 40 per cent. of our workers were organised, and in consequence wages were low, and hours long. In Verviers, for instance, a week of 60 to 63 hours was worked. However, in Flanders we have at present 50,000 organised textile workers, as against 20,000 before the war, working under collective agreements, and in no case more than nine hours a day. In the Verviers district all the textile workers are organised, and since 1920 they have had an 8-hour day, while wages

have increased fourfold since before the war. A month ago an Eight Hour Day Act was passed, which is to come into force on 1 October 1921. With the help of our Socialist Labour Minister, the employers were induced to create a fund from which the unemployed received relief to the extent of 5 francs daily, 1.50 francs for their wives, and 1 franc for each child under 14 years of age. Before the war a wage of 25 to 30 francs was paid for a week of 63 to 72 hours in this district, but since 1 January 1921 the 48-hour week has been in force, with a minimum wage of 100 francs.

In addition to the national fund, there is also a special fund of the Employers' Association, from which those unemployed for long periods receive 48 francs relief for each complete month of unemployment. The single loom system has been introduced, but in spite of this 70 to 80 per cent. of the workers are wholly or partially unemployed. The employers ascribe this to German competition, which is based on relatively lower wages. In view of present conditions, we should demand unemployment relief at a rate approaching as closely as possible to normal wages. The more democratically minded of our parliamentary representatives must be urged to press our demands in different Parliaments. The campaign for transferring the chief means of production to the ownership of the community must also be prosecuted. We cannot, however, decide here on purely political matters, because that would only lead to difficulties within our organisations. This I say, although our trade union is directly affiliated to the Socialist Belgian Labour Party, but within our union we abstain from party politics.

Mr. GALLI (*Italy*): All branches of the industry in Italy have been more or less affected by the economic depression. The low rate of our exchange made it possible for Roumanian dealers to buy up our stocks at cheap rates. Now our employers are demanding reductions in wages, in order to compete with other countries in manufacturing new stock. In spite of this, however, certain branches, such as the silk industry, will be as little able to survive as in France. Unemployment relief varies between 2.50 and 3.50 lire. In order to mitigate the distress, our union has established a great co-operative undertaking, through which we purchase textile goods in large quantities, in order to create employment and to sell these goods direct to the consumer without employing middlemen. This undertaking has been so successful, that in spite of the extremely low charges, we were able to maintain the present great struggle out of the surplus without touching the ordinary funds of the union. If the textile industry is to be revived, one thing above all others is necessary, namely, the resumption of trade relations with Russia.

Mr. DELVILLE (*Belgium*): We see that the present capitalist system is unable to solve this problem, but we ourselves are powerless as well. If Socialism is to be the solution, we must above all things be better informed as to all the phenomena of the present economic system. We must be acquainted with the exact circumstances of each group in each country; then we should be able to attempt not only to standardise general labour conditions, but also wages, so as to abolish unfair competition. For instance, we see today that the exchange value of the German mark has become a great danger to Belgian industry, because our industries, which pay comparatively higher wages, cannot meet this competition. If nothing is done this will lead to the complete annihilation of our industries. The German workers must therefore insist on higher wages, so that they no longer fall behind ours, and for this purpose we ought to afford them every assistance which may be necessary. In order to achieve some practical results, I would suggest that we issue a carefully drafted questionnaire, in order to determine precisely all the circumstances.

Mr. JAECKEL (*Germany*) proposed that the Committee already appointed should also deal with the question of the revival of the textile industry.

Mr. GESELL (*France*) reporting on behalf of the Committee, laid before the Congress the two following resolutions on hours of work, and on unemployment and reconstruction.

Resolution on Hours of Work

This Congress, representing over one and a half million organised textile workers, resolves that the affiliated national organisations shall engage immediately in a campaign for the 44-hour week, namely eight hours on the first five days of the week, and four hours on Saturdays. Hours of labour should not be more than seven per day on shift work, and in this case Saturday afternoons should be free. Every worker should be entitled to annual holidays without loss of wages. Overtime should be permitted only with the consent of the Union. No reduction of wages should take place when hours are reduced.

The International Secretary is requested to get into touch with the International Federation of Trade Unions at Amsterdam to obtain the application of the 8-hour day and Saturday afternoon holiday in all European and non-European countries in order to do away with the present unfair competition.

Resolution on Unemployment and Reconstruction

Considering that the economic ruin of all European peoples, as also the terrible distress of the proletarian masses, and in particular the catastrophic collapse of the textile industry throughout almost the whole of Europe, are the necessary results of the terrible world war; considering further that the capitalist economic system continually produces within itself the seeds of fresh military conflict between peoples, and prevents honest co-operation between the nations and the progress of civilisation; that since the end of the war the policies pursued by capitalist governments, and the measures they have adopted, have led to a general stoppage of business and wide-spread unemployment, and have not been able to rebuild industry, but that on the contrary, in spite of the great shortage of textile products, thousands of textile mills are standing idle;

This Congress declares that the millions of textile workers united in the International Federation hereby promise to devote all their efforts to the abolition of the capitalist system, which is the source of all the evils from which humanity suffers and to further the rapid development of a socialist organisation of labour. They pledge themselves to offer the most energetic resistance with all means in their power to the chauvinist and reactionary forces in all countries, and, in case of further war, to refuse to work on the production of war material, or to enlist in the army. In the class war of the proletariat, and the concentration of proletarian forces throughout the world in a united struggle for political power, the Congress sees the only means of restoring the world. The Congress therefore urges the international proletariat of textile workers to work enthusiastically during the transition period for democracy in the state and in industry, and for a policy of justice and frankness, and to fight against the old methods of imperialist and militarist secret diplomacy.

The Congress demands of those at present in power the following measures for combating unemployment:

- (1) Provision of the largest amount of employment possible by the undertaking of works of public utility.
- (2) Unemployment relief at a rate equivalent to the wage aimed at by the workers of the same grade.
- (3) Adoption of a maximum working week of 44 hours.
- (4) Prohibition of all overtime.
- (5) Limitation of the number of looms and other machines worked by individual workers to a minimum, and determination of maximum hours.
- (6) Introduction of short-time as long as unemployment prevails to any considerable extent.
- (7) Measures for stabilising the exchanges.

(8) Resumption of unrestricted trade and exchange relations between the former belligerent countries, including Russia.

Mr. LEFÈVRE (*Belgium*), Mr. CHRISTENSEN (*Denmark*), Mr. GALLI (*Italy*), and Mr. ROEDEL (*Germany*) took part in the debate on the resolutions. The last-named said that the importance of the fact that hours were longer in backward countries should not be over-estimated, for the output of labour in these countries was relatively lower and in consequence their power to compete with more advanced countries by no means so great as it appeared. The resolutions were unanimously adopted.

International Action

Mr. HAEBERLIN (*Switzerland*) spoke in support of the motion introduced by the Swiss Union demanding united action by textile workers in all countries. In view of the fact that under the pressure of circumstances governments and employers were prepared to grant concessions immediately after the war, but that during the present economic crisis they were everywhere steadily withdrawing these, labour must be prepared to act with greater concentration, and to adopt more severe measures in its defence. Social conflicts of a purely local or national character could no longer lead to success. Further, it should be remembered that conditions in all countries were very similar, and that this naturally made united action essential. Mr. CHRISTENSEN (*Denmark*) feared that such a resolution could only remain on paper, for in practice it could not possibly be carried into effect. How, for instance, was an international strike possible when collective agreements in each country varied, and expired at different periods. For the moment the struggle must be left in the hands of the individual national organisations, although of course every possible assistance should be rendered them. Mr. LEFÈVRE (*Belgium*) considered that the influence of the workers could best be strengthened by co-operation between the trade union and the political movement. An essential condition was, however, the avoidance of disruptions such as had resulted in Germany and France. At the suggestion of Mr. MARTI (*Switzerland*) the matter was referred to the International Committee.

Works Councils

Mr. ENGEL (*Germany*) reported on the German Works Councils Act, and said that in spite of all its defects it had meant an important step forward for labour ⁽³⁾. After

(3) See INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE: *Studies and Reports*, Series B, No. 6, for an account of Works Councils in Germany, Luxemburg, Norway, Austria, and Czecho-Slovakia.

Mr. Engel's report, the wish was expressed that the International Secretariat should obtain similar information from other countries, and transmit them to the various national headquarters. Further discussion was prevented by lack of time.

Mr. JOUHAUX, Secretary of the French Confederation of Labour, welcomed the Congress on behalf of the International Federation of Trade Unions.

The Federation and the International Labour Office

A representative of the International Labour Office gave a report of the execution of Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles, dealing with the International Labour Organisation, the Conferences hitherto held, and the results of the work of the International Labour Office ⁽⁴⁾. He dealt in particular with the importance of this new institution to the trade union movement of all countries.

Mr. SHAW: I too have something to say on this question. I know the Director of the International Labour Office and a number of his colleagues. I also know the work and the many publications of the Office. After all that I have seen up to the present, I can only express the sincere hope that our comrades will frequently take the opportunity to go to Geneva, and see the work for themselves. No doubt we are justified in asking if everything has been fulfilled which was promised to labour by Part XIII of the Peace Treaty, but we must admit that by taking part in this institution we have been able to promote many an improvement. By the pressure of labour alone, Germany and Austria were at once admitted to this organisation ⁽⁵⁾. I myself took part in the first Conference at Washington, and was Chairman of the Commission on Hours of Labour. The difficulties were not few, and although we would all have wished to have gone further, yet we finally had to agree to what was then obtainable in order to return home with practical results. No one can realise how great a step forward the Washington decisions really represent, unless they are acquainted with conditions in backward countries. It was further expressly determined that no modification could be allowed of conditions which were already satisfactory.

We Englishmen have a particular grievance against our government. Although its representatives supported the Conventions adopted at Washington, it now attempts to break the word which it pledged. The British trade unions will insist all the more that the Washington Conventions shall be carried out in Great Britain just because our country ought to set a good example to the others in fulfilling the obligations contracted. But we must all bring pressure to bear on our governments to obtain the ratification of the Washington Conventions. This too will make it possible to improve the conditions of labour in backward countries, and to eliminate unfair competition. We were well aware that the Conventions that were finally accepted after much argument would not obtain the approval of all our colleagues, but we preferred to obtain practical results rather than give up opposition, and refuse to participate.

Another important function of the Labour Office which is of value to the trade union movement is the collection of material and the investigations

(4) See *International Labour Review*, Vol. I, No. 1, Jan. 1921, pp. 23-40: *The First Year of the International Labour Organisation*.

(5) See INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE: *The Admission of Germany and Austria to the International Labour Organisation*. London, 1920.

which the Labour Office can undertake on a scale that would never be possible for an international trade union secretariat. It is able to call on the collaboration of a large number of linguistic and technical experts whose work is thus placed at the disposal of all trade union organisations.

After a few remarks the Chairman stated that the Congress endorsed the decisions arrived at in Washington, welcomed the International Labour Organisation as a step in advance, and urged labour to take energetic part in its extension. It further urged the International Committee to support the International Labour Office in Geneva in every possible way.

Admission of Foreign Workers to the Management of Trade Unions

Mr. VANDEPUTTE (*France*) stated that as a result of trade union law, foreign workers in France were prevented from taking part in the management of trade unions. He therefore wished that this matter should specially be dealt with, assuming that similar regulations applied in other countries as well. As he now learned that this was not the case, he would be satisfied if the Congress energetically supports the French demand for the amendment of this reactionary regulation.

Mr. GALLI (*Italy*) declared that similar special regulations had been cancelled in his country. It was therefore all the more surprising that they still existed in Republican France. At his suggestion the Congress voted a protest on the lines of the French proposal.

Accident Insurance

It had been the intention of the French Union to lay a full report before the Conference on this question, which had been included in the agenda at its request, but in view of recent developments this had not been possible. It therefore proposed to refer the question to the International Committee. The Congress agreed to this proposal.

Changes in the Constitution

Mr. VANDEPUTTE (*France*) stated that the French delegates had drawn up a full report now in the hands of the delegates. He considered that the best method to follow would be to discover whether there were any objections to their proposals. In the main, their object was the creation of a smaller committee as the executive organ of the International, so that it could meet as often as might be required. Under present conditions the annual sessions of the large Committee, provided for in the constitution, are inadequate. In view of the shortness of time, however, the French delegates were prepared to refer this matter, too, to the International Committee for further treatment, after hearing the various views on the subject.

Mr. SHAW feared that the creation of a second committee would only lead to difficulties, but considered that the existing

Committee could be given the necessary powers to act in the sense desired by the French. Mr. VANDEPUTTE agreed to this proposal, and the question of altering the constitution was therefore referred to the International Committee.

The Next International Congress

A number of delegations invited the Congress to hold its next meeting in their countries. A vote was taken on the rival proposals of Dresden and Naples, and Naples was adopted by 6 votes to 3.

Prevention of War

Mr. BAUDON (*Belgium*) moved that the International Committee should also consider the question of the prevention of future wars. Mr. SHAW held that this question could not be solved by textile workers alone, and that it should be referred to the International Federation of Trade Unions. An Italian delegate proposed that in spite of this the Congress should pass a special resolution on disarmament. Mr. JAECKEL (*Germany*) agreed with Mr. Shaw, especially as the Congress had already expressed its opposition to war on principle in various other resolutions. Any further action on this matter should be left to the general labour organisations. If these reached decisions and determined lines of action, the individual groups in the International could make plans in conformity. Mr. BAUDON (*Belgium*) held to his proposal, which of course could also be transmitted to the Trade Union International. He had already been deputed by the Belgian Textile Workers' Congress to lay this resolution before the Textile Workers' International, and he was of the opinion that the latter ought at once to adopt a definite attitude. After remarks by Mr. Christensen and Mr. Shaw, it was decided to refer Mr. Baudon's resolution, which runs as follows, to the Amsterdam International.

The International Textile Workers' Congress of 19-24 September 1921 decides to place on the Agenda of the International Committee the question of disarmament and the examination of ways and means for preventing future wars.

After Mr. Shaw and Mr. Marti, the Chairman, had thanked the French Union and other colleagues and had bid the delegates farewell, the Congress was closed at 6 p. m. on 23 September.

Meeting of the International Committee

Another meeting of the International Committee was held at the close of the Congress in order to discuss details connected with the establishment of a permanent office in London. The next meeting of the Committee is to be held in the beginning of January 1922 at Reichenberg (Czecho-Slovakia).

APPENDIX

STATISTICS OF AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS⁽¹⁾

Country ⁽²⁾	Delegates			Membership of the Federation			Average hourly wage rate	
	Total	Parliamentary representatives	Other public Officials	Total	Women	Percent. of workers in the industry (approx.)	Men	Women
Switzerland	3	—	1	18,000	10,500	20	(3)	(3)
France ⁽⁴⁾	7	—	—	130,000	—	15	—	—
Belgium	11	—	9	60,000	29,000 ⁽⁵⁾	80 ⁽⁶⁾	(7)	—
Denmark	2	—	1	10,000	6,000	100	132 öre ⁽⁸⁾	82 öre ⁽⁹⁾
Germany	25	8	6	600,000	—	95	5-7 Mk.	3-5 Mk. ⁽¹²⁾
Great Britain	35	2	18	413,000 ⁽¹⁰⁾	abt. 60%	50	£3 10s ⁽¹¹⁾	£2 10s
Holland	2	—	—	6,300	—	10	(13)	(13)
Italy	4	—	2	150,000 ⁽¹⁴⁾	—	30	—	—
Sweden	1	—	—	16,000	—	48	10 öre	75 öre
Czecho-Slovakia :								
German	4	1	—	95,000	—	85	3.20-5.20	2.50-3.20
Czech	2	—	—	68,000	—	85	Kr. ⁽¹⁵⁾	Kr. ⁽¹⁵⁾
Totals	96			1,566,300			—	—

- (1) The above table is based on returns made by the delegates present at the Congress.
- (2) The Federation also has affiliated bodies in Austria, Hungary, and the United States, which were not represented at the Congress.
- (3) Cotton industry: men 95 centimes, women 75 centimes. Silk industry: men 1.09 francs, women 85 centimes.
- (4) The delegate from Alsace-Lorraine reported that 60 per cent. of the workers of that province belong to the Union, i.e. 9,500 men and 13,500 women, whose hourly wage varies between 1.50 and 2.25 francs.
- (5) Plus 10,000 children.
- (6) If 80,000 unorganised home workers are included in the total of workers in the industry, this percentage is reduced to about 40.
- (7) The basic wages of 1914 have been adjusted periodically according to the official index numbers of the cost of living.
- (8) Piece rates 170 öre.
- (9) Piece rates 110 öre.
- (10) In the cotton industry 333,000 members; in the woollen industry 80,000.
- (11) Minimum weekly rate. Maximum £4.
- (12) Minimum weekly rate. Maximum £3 10s. Young persons £1 10s. to £2 10s.
- (13) Weavers and spinners 20 to 30 florins per week.
- (14) Cotton industry 60,000; woollen industry 50,000; silk industry 15,000; ribbon weavers 4,000; jute workers 3,000; miscellaneous textile workers 18,000.
- (15) Weavers 3.80 to 4.20 kronen; spinners 4 to 5.60 kronen; dyers 3.60 to 4 kronen.

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